

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L LOME 1579

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM CASC PINT TO

SUBJ: PRESIDENT YEADAMA ON LIMITATION OF PROLIFERATION OF RELIGIOUS
SECTS

CEF: A LOME 1564 B LOME 1565 C LOME 1566 D LOME 1578

1. IN THE CONTEXT OF MY DEMARCHE ON THE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR WORLD EVANGELISM (ABWE), I ASKED PRESIDENT EYADEMA IF HE WOULD COMMENT ON THE RESOLUTION PASSED AT THE RECENT NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING OF HIS RASSEMBLEMENT DU PEUPLE TOGOLAIS (RALLY OF THE TOGOLESE PEOPLE, RPT). HE PREFACED HIS REMARKS BY SAYING THAT A CENTRAL FEATURE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING WAS TO CONSOLIDATE THE POSITION OF THE PARTY AND THE STATE IN TOGOLESE LIFE. HE REVIEWED FOR ME THE FACT THAT NATIONAL UNITY WAS STILL A FLEDGLING CREATURE AND THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY HAD BEEN HAVING PROBLEMS WITH SOME OF THE SMALLER RELIGIOUS SECTS IN TERMS OF THEIR WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT AND DEFER TO STATE AND PARTY SYMBOLS.

2. HE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE RECOGNITION OF THE SIX MAJOR RELIGIONS (CATHOLICISM, THE GERMAN-INTRODUCED PROTESTANTISM,
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ISLAM, THE AFRICANIZED ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, THE BAPTISTS, AND THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS) WOULD FACILITATE THEIR TASK AND AT THE SAME TIME ACHIEVE THE END OF LIMITING THE ACTIVITIES OF SUCH GROUPS AS THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. HE IMPLIED STRONGLY THAT JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WERE THE PRINCIPAL TARGET OF THE RESOLUTION SAYING THAT THEIR CREED THAT THEY RECOGNIZED ONLY GOD'S LAW ON THIS EARTH AND THEIR METHODS OF PROPAGATING THEIR FAITH WERE

CAUSING PROBLEMS FOR THE PARTY AND THE STATE. HE SAID THAT SINCE THEY DO NOT RECOGNIZE STATE'S AUTHORITY IN SUCH MATTERS AS DEFERENCE TO THE FLAG, THE SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEMS AND SO FORTH THAT THIS LED TO POLITICAL CONFUSION WHICH HE DID NOT WISH TO HAVE.

3. I NOTED THAT SUCH GROUPS HAVE A CERTAIN NUISANCE VALUE AND IT IS CERTAINLY WITHIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE TO DO WHAT IT WISHES, BUT I SAID I HOPED THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WAS INVOLVED. HE REVERTED TO THE QUESTION OF THE RECOGNIZED RELIGIONS, SAYING THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THIS ISSUE HAD NOT BEEN COMPROMISED.

4. COMMENT: THE DISCUSSION WAS QUITE RELAXED. THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD FROM A GOOD SOURCE THAT THE INITIATIVE FOR THE PARTY RESOLUTION DID NOT ORIGINATE ENTIRELY WITH THE PARTY. THERE ARE STORIES THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ORGANIZED CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITIES HAD COMPLAINED TO THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE PROLIFERATION OF "CHRISTIAN" CHARISMATIC AND EVANGELICAL SECTS, PARTICULARLY AFRICAN SECTS, SOME OF WHICH ARE APPARENTLY LED BY REPORTEDLY UNSCRUPULOUS LEADERS. PALMER

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